

From: "wangdn@bayou.com%inter2" <wangdn@bayou.com>
Subject: Farm Bill 2007 Official Comments - 12/29/2005 10:19 AM CST
Date Sent: 12/29/2005 10:19:58 CST
Date Received: 12/29/2005 10:21:18 CST

Email: wangdn@bayou.com

FirstName: Allen

LastName: Nipper

Address1: 170 Hill Farm Road

Address2:

City: Homer

State: Louisiana

zipcode: 71040

Question1: Our family owns just over 225 acres of forestland in four tracts located in Columbia County, Arkansas and in Webster and Rapides Parishes in Louisiana. We're proud that some of this land has been in our family since 1903, and it has been passed down for five generations. Our families have been involved in timber production and sawmill operations since the late 1800's. We continue to manage the land under best management practices and keep it in trees and in production at all times. We have three children that are involved in the management of the land and timber, and the two that are out of college have jobs that benefit the timber community. Supporting sustainably managed family owned forests like ours means keeping our U.S. forests as forests.

Things like loss of markets and other financial and regulatory burdens make it hard to be able to afford to keep the land or for young producers to purchase timberland. Some of our neighbors have even sold their forests for development. Others are having trouble finding an heir willing to take on the challenge of owning and managing forest land. Obstacles we deal with every day include pests and pathogens, invasive species, market loss to foreign countries, the risk of severe wildfire, urban sprawl, increased unnecessary environmental regulations, and loss of private property rights. The 2007 Farm Bill needs to address the needs of the forestry community to provide for protection of timber lands from all the obstacles mentioned above so the next generation is not discouraged from producing timber.

Question2: Timber markets in other countries are protected by their government's involvement in the timber holdings and ownership and / or lack of labor and environmental regulations that timberland owners and the forestry product industry in the U.S. have to follow. There needs to be some way to level the playing field so forestry products imported into this country are brought in at a price that is comparable in value and price to the same product grown and produced in the U.S.

Question3: We need Congress' help in providing us and the other private, non-industrial forest owners with more funding and technical assistance; provisions to give us the resources we need to resist selling our land and having it taken out of production. Currently, less than 1% of Farm Bill programs are directed to us as non-industrial, private forest landowners. The 2007 Farm Bill reauthorization provides a chance to improve this number.

In the 2007 Farm Bill we need to see more priority given to forestry programs. We've been left out of past Farm Bills, and we need support to be able to keep our land in the family and continue the good work that we've been doing on our land.

Question4: Besides being part of our family legacy, our forests provide so many other benefits. Not only do we supply wood to the local

sawmills, but we supply clean air and water, sequester carbon dioxide, and provide habitat for wildlife. These benefits are a byproduct of the hard work and passion that we put into our land.

Over 60% of the nation's drinking water is supplied directly from privately owned timberlands. These timberlands serve as a natural filter and reservoir. While our family's timberlands are in various stages of production, we feel that on an average we remove over two tons of carbon dioxide per acre per year for a total of over 450 tons across all of our lands. There are few other enterprises that can be expected to remove that amount as well as provide for clean water.

Question5: All of the economic and environmental benefits from U.S. tree farms depend on our ability to keep our forestlands and a decision to pass the land on to the next generation. Things like loss of markets and other financial and regulatory burdens make it hard to be able to afford to keep the land.

Most of us take more pride and pleasure than profit from our lands in most years. However, when we do harvest our land, we supply wood to mills in our area which is turned into wood products we all use. However, times are changing. Many companies have downsized or moved overseas. We now have to compete with international exports which often come from countries without environmental and labor regulations. More attention needs to be paid to the benefits forestry operations provide to rural economic growth, especially in the South.

Question6: In our experience, more educational, technical, and financial assistance available to private, non-industrial forest landowners is needed to encourage them to keep the family land in a forest situation so they can develop a long term plan for management. Educational programs on forestry management, tax consequences, and need for professional advisors are badly needed. Because of the lack of education of landowners, timberlands are becoming fragmented and smaller which decreases land and timber management planning and lower use of professional advice as well as reduced income to the family and fewer taxes paid to federal, state, and local governments.

Few USDA programs support forestry as compared to row crops, and most make it is too hard and take too long to get funds to forestry landowners. Non-industrial, family forestry operations have been treated by USDA as a very low priority and that needs to change and change soon if the industry is to remain viable.